



EPISODE 2x17: "TESTAMENT"

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"Book's Prayer" culled from the "SERENITY" movie script by Joss
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Teaser

EXT. HAVEN – PRE-DAWN

BIRD'S EYE view of the landscape beneath, soaring over what used to be Haven. It is in FLAMES – a vision of Hell. Dropping down through the SMOKE and wavering heat to—

Witness the destruction and devastation. Some homes burn bright. Others are nothing but piles of smoldering wood and rubble. Something EXPLODES with SPARKS.

BOOK (VO)

Lord, I am walking your way.

Farther down now: BODIES – some incomplete, some on fire – lie in the dust like strings of paper dolls surrounding craters in the earth.

BOOK (VO cont'd)

Let me in, for my feet are sore, my clothes are ragged.

FAST, UNSTEADY PAN toward the CANNON MOUNT (the "Big Stick") lined with bloody sandbags.

SHEPHERD BOOK lies across the sandbags; his stomach glistens dark and wet, his shirt torn and ripped with HOLES.

CLOSER still, he stares up into the pre-dawn sky. Lips move with silent whispers. Chest rises with quick, labored breaths.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

Look in my eyes, Lord, and my sins will play out on them
as on a screen.

PULL BACK and FADE TO WHITE.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

Read them all.

EXT. HAVEN – BOOK'S CHURCH – DUSK – ESTABLISHING

A FIGURE walks up the dirt path to Book's church, silhouettes against the red-purple sky.

TITLE: Ten Hours Earlier

EXT. HAVEN – GARDEN OUTSIDE BOOK’S CHURCH

The figure — Book — pauses at the garden, hunkers down to check the plants, finds a WEED and pulls it free. He studies it, but does not toss it aside.

He stands up and walks to the FRONT DOORS. With the small weed, he holds an old, tattered BIBLE in his hands — the torn and taped pages mark it as the same one that River tried to “fix.”

He takes a deep breath, opens the doors, and walks into—

INT. BOOK’S CHURCH – CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: Book’s feet as he walks up the center aisle to the LECTERN. The pews are not visible on either side. The church is very still and QUIET, his STEPS the only sound.

He stands behind the lectern, sets his Bible down, and faces the pews. Smiles.

BOOK

I’m sure you have noticed my garden, just outside the church doors. I’ve always loved to garden, even as a young boy. I love to watch things sprout and grow, and it always amazes me how something so large and powerful like the tallest trees, or something so plump and good to eat as strawberries, come from the smallest seeds. It is one of the many miracles of God’s Creation, over which we are to be stewards. We are commanded to tend the lands. To subdue them.

Book raises the small weed, its roots trailing down toward the lectern.

BOOK (cont’d)

On the other hand, I hate weeding. Weeds are ugly. Useless. They choke and destroy the beauty of God’s Creation. They prickle and itch, and spread if left unchecked. Weeds are constant, and so it takes patience and vigilance to tend a garden.

Book puts the weed down, and thumbs through the Bible.

BOOK (cont’d)

What does the Good Shepherd have to say about this? He tells us the parable of the weeds amongst the wheat, where he said...

FLASHCUT: A golden field of wheat, swaying in the breeze.

BOOK (VO, cont'd))

"The kingdom of Heaven is like what happened when a farmer scattered good seed in a field..."

The swaying wheat begins to speed up, like time-lapse photography, and we see the wheat become diseased and red.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

"But while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and scattered weed seeds in the field and then left."

FLASHCUT: Back to Book at the lectern.

BOOK (cont'd)

"When the plants came up and began to ripen, the farmer's servants could see the weeds. The servants came and asked, 'Sir, do you want us to go out and pull up the weeds?' 'No!' he answered. 'You might also pull up the wheat. Leave the weeds alone until harvest time.'"

FLASHCUT: The field of wheat has withered and died. Firelight glows orange on the horizon. Above, thick smoke fills and darkens the air to shades of night.

A military MAN, visible only in silhouette, stands at ease with hands behind his back and watches.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

"Then I'll tell my workers to gather the weeds and tie them up and burn them."

FLASHCUT: Back to Book at the lectern.

BOOK (cont'd)

"But I'll have them store the wheat in my barn."

Book closes the Bible.

BOOK (cont'd)

Later on, the Good Shepherd explains to his friends the meaning of the parable. That the farmer is Himself, and that the field is Earth-that-Was. The good seeds are us, who belong to His kingdom...

FLASHCUT: ZOOM on the man watching the flames.

In his hands behind his back, he holds a black BERET.

PAN AROUND to face him. The man is Book, some years younger, but still wrinkled and beginning to gray. His hair is cut short. He wears a clean black Mandarin-style

uniform, with no rank. A single white patch on his shoulder reads "K.I.S.S." The firelight glints in his eyes. His face is unreadable.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The weed seeds are those who belong to the Enemy, who scattered them. And the harvest is the End of Days, which is yet to come.

FLASHCUT: Back to present-day Book.

He looks down at the weed on the lectern.

BOOK (cont'd)

No matter how far I travel, no matter how much I try to... change... the weeds of my past keep coming back. I feel it is time to pull them free again. To confess my sins to you...

Book looks up, calm, stern, standing up straight. He clasps his hands behind his back, at ease, the Bible disappearing.

BOOK (cont'd)

I haven't always been a Shepherd. My given name is not Derrial Book. And the truth is, when others have created worlds, and made things grow...

CLOSE ON: his tortured eyes.

BOOK (cont'd)

I have destroyed them.

Book studies the pews, head tracing from left to right. Whatever he sees, he maintains his composure.

BOOK (cont'd)

My true name is Allan Creed, and this is my testimony before God.

Act One

EXT. SIHNON – XINTING CITY – K.I.S.S. OFFICES – DAY – ESTABLISHING

TITLE: Ten Years Ago

Though expansive in size, XinTing is not thick and dense with towers and skyscrapers, but serene, with smooth yellow-brown buildings and green landscaping between, a perfect blend of urban and open space.

BOOK (VO)

I'm sure you all remember where you were and what you were doing when the War began. It was one of those moments in life that sears itself into memory.

CLOSE IN on one building. A sign out front identifies it as the offices of 'Kreed Independent Security Services' – K.I.S.S.

INT. SIHNON – K.I.S.S. OFFICES – DAY

CLOSE ON: A neatly-trimmed Bonsai tree in a pot. The spout of a WATERING CAN tips to pour water on it.

KREED (OS)

(faint)

Well, make them listen, then! They can't treat the outer worlds in such a way and not expect a fight...

GRACE (OS)

They disagree with you, sir.

We follow the watering can to the next tree, but it stops as a RINGING BEEP is heard.

BOOK (VO)

Most in the 'Verse saw the first reports over the Cortex, or while watching the CorVue. Perhaps out here, you heard about it on the radio. I got a Wave.

PULL BACK: to see ALLAN KREED, younger than the wheat field flashback, but still gray and military. He wears a mandarin collared gray suit – a mix of West and East.

He looks to GRACE, an attractive professional woman: Asian, wearing glasses, perhaps ten years his junior. She carries a PDA-like device in one hand, but is looking at the WAVE MONITOR on Kreed's desk.

GRACE
High-priority. Secure channel.

KREED
It's about time.

Kreed sets the watering can down hard, sits down in front of the Wave monitor, and places a SMALL DEVICE in his ear. He taps a few buttons, and the face of ADMIRAL JING-YING – weathered, with a receding hairline – fills the screen.

KREED
Kreed. Speak.
(he listens, then:)
I see.

Jing-Ying mouths his words on the screen, his eyes wide with panic.

KREED (cont'd)
Get control of yourself, Admiral. This was to be expected.
(beat)
I understand. I'll be there shortly.

Kreed punches a button and looks up at Grace. Their eyes meet.

EXT. SIHNON – XINTING STREET – DAY – MOMENTS LATER

PEOPLE everywhere: Bicycles, hawkers and businessmen dot the sidewalks as large and small HOVERCRAFT compete with RICKSHAWs for space on the street. LARGE CORVUE MONITORS fill storefronts everywhere.

Kreed and Grace walk down the street with purpose. Pedestrians automatically move out of their way.

BOOK (VO)
I heard the news before everyone else. Heard about it before the first casualty of war bled out, probably. Straight from the top. From MilCom high brass. A man I had commanded before I left the military for the private sector. But I never really left.

Suddenly, every CorVue lights up identically with "Breaking News" (in English and Mandarin). The volume, which before was faint, now increases.

On the CorVues, A FEMALE NEWSCASTER speaks with breathless urgency.

FEMALE NEWSCASTER
For the first time in its history, the Alliance is at war.

Some citizens stop what they are doing and look at the monitors, shocked.

FEMALE NEWSCASTER (cont'd)

In a unanimous vote just moments ago, a special session of Parliament has declared war on the so-called Independent Militia in response to its seizure of the Tully Military Garrison on Santo.

The ripples spread, the former movement of the people becoming still, as more and more turn to the CorVues.

FEMALE NEWSCASTER (cont'd)

This is the seventh such seizure by the loosely-organized Independent Militia, and Parliament had previously warned that further action would not be tolerated.

Kreed and Grace weave through the frozen crowd.

KREED

Stay close to me, Grace. Things could get ugly real fast.

FEMALE NEWSCASTER

Experts predict that casualties will be high on both sides—

They continue on, and enter—

EXT. SIHNON – XINTING CITY SQUARE – CONTINUOUS

More PEOPLE look up at screens, or at portable CorVues and wave monitors, receiving word of the war.

Kreed notices a lone MAN IN SUNGLASSES standing on the outside perimeter of the square. He is unique – the only one not looking up at the monitors. He watches the crowd, calm and alert.

KREED

Would you look at that.

GRACE

I see him. Pathetic.

KREED

We have time for a short lesson.

Kreed approaches him as Grace takes a different path, disappearing into the crowd.

KREED

Excuse me, young man, but can you point me toward the Admiral? I can't quite make him out.

The man reaches into his coat.

MAN IN SUNGLASSES

I'm sorry, old timer, but you need to—

KREED

(indicating the man should turn around)

What you need is a priest, because you're dead.

The man turns: Grace stands behind him, gun at his throat. She lowers it and smiles. The man turns back, easing off.

KREED (cont'd)

(low, but firm)

When you're working the perimeter, boy, you need to blend in. You're a member of Admiral Jing-Ying's security team in a time of war, not some damned rent-a-cop at a marketplace.

MAN IN SUNGLASSES

Yes, sir. He's waiting for you in the rock garden, sir.

Kreed and Grace move off. Grace smiles at the man as she moves past.

The man watches them go, then turns to the monitors, blending in with those around him.

BOOK (VO)

During my time in the military, I became known for enforcing the rules. I even wrote some of them. There were no shortcuts. No compromises. I earned the name "By the Book" Kreed. I allowed it to define me.

Kreed and Grace continue across the square, toward its center. The people surrounding them begin to panic. Ripples of movement spread. Some run. Some SHOUT.

It is subtle, though, and somehow orderly – a central planet ruckus. The disorder slowly builds as Kreed and Grace approach the—

EXT. SIHNON – XINTING CITY SQUARE – ROCK GARDEN – MOMENTS LATER

The Eastern influence of the rock garden is clear. It is beautiful. Quiet.

Kreed and Grace cross a short STONE BRIDGE over a glassy pond. On the other side stand THREE SECURITY GUARDS. They are tense, noticing the commotion picking up in the square.

Admiral Jing-Ying, sitting on a STONE BENCH behind them, stands at attention at the sight of Kreed.

The security team parts and Kreed and Grace step through.

ADMIRAL JING-YING

Ni hao <Good day>, sir.

KREED

Hardly. You look like hell, Peter. Please, sit back down before you fall down.

They sit together. Grace keeps her distance, giving them some amount of privacy.

KREED (cont'd)

Can't say I didn't warn you. Saw this coming for a long time. And now, rivers will run red with blood.

ADMIRAL JING-YING

That from Revelations?

KREED

Can't recall exactly, all I know is it scared the *gos se* <crap> out of me as a kid. Fear is a good motivator.

Kreed reaches into his coat and plucks free a cigar case, cutter and lighter. He pulls out a CIGAR and offers it to the Admiral, but he shakes his head no. Kreed cuts it, lights it and smokes.

Grace steps forward, and he hands the cut pieces to her.

KREED (cont'd)

You'll do fine, Peter. You weren't my protégé like Grace, here, but you were a damn fine tactician and leader. Just speak up at the round table and—

ADMIRAL JING-YING

We want you back.

(off Kreed's look)

MilCom. We need your assets to win this war. We need you.

Kreed looks away. At the panicked CROWD beyond the garden. He smokes. He considers this for a moment.

KREED

I'd expect alpha-level clearance. Full autonomy. I have the necessary intelligence infrastructure to operate independently, but my people don't do wetworks. I'd want the best of the best at my disposal.

ADMIRAL JING-YING

Of course, sir. You'd be reinstated as—

KREED

I don't want a rank, Admiral.

(cold)

Shouldn't need one.

ADMIRAL JING-YING

Whatever you want, sir.

Kreed puts out his cigar on the stone.

KREED

It's not too late, Peter. We make the right moves, we can end this war without those rivers running red. The people who live out there, on the outer planets, they aren't savages as some would lead us to believe. They may be uncivilized, or unenlightened by our standards, but they are good people. Just trying to get by.

ADMIRAL JING-YING

That's why we need you, sir. Your contacts out there, your reputation... If we're to win—

Kreed cuts him off as he stands, putting his cigar away in the case.

KREED

I'm not here to win, Admiral. I'm here to bring order to the chaos.

Kreed reaches into his pocket and tosses Admiral Jing-Ying his IDENT-CARD. The Admiral plugs it into a small device and punches the screen a few times as Kreed continues:

KREED (cont'd)

The Independents may have fired the first shot, but we started this war. And so we must end it.

Jing-Ying hands the Ident-Card back to Kreed with a nod and small smile. Kreed accepts it with a nod of his own, and walks away, Grace moving in at his side.

They walk back across the stone bridge, and into the crowd.

GRACE
So we're back?

KREED
Yes.

People scramble for FOOD and SUPPLIES – at the edge of the square, a crowd descends upon a SMALL CONVENIENCE STORE, people running out with containers of milk and loaves of bread under their arms.

Kreed watches them closely, in thought.

KREED (cont'd)
We're back.

INT. SIHNON – MILCOM HEADQUARTERS – WAR ROOM – LATER

CorVue screens cover the walls of a large, round, metallic room. A monitor hangs from the ceiling. Beneath it, system maps and documents litter the round table in the center of the room. A basket of APPLES sits in the center of the table.

The MILCOM HIGH COMMAND sit around the table – twelve men and women (Admiral Jing-Ying being one of them). Some are civilian, others in military uniform, all clean, straight and sterile. Some have AIDES standing or seated behind them, away from the table.

Kreed, in a black military Mandarin-style uniform and beret, sits at the table, Grace standing behind him.

One of the GENERALS speaks.

BOOK (VO)
It took time to research my plan. The war escalated from bad to worse, and the Security Council wanted to crush the Independents with overwhelming strength. I sought a less devastating solution.

The general finishes talking. The man in charge, the SECRETARY OF WAR – obvious by his many medals on his uniform – turns to Kreed.

SECRETARY OF WAR
Mister Kreed?

KREED
Thank you, Mister Secretary.
(he stands)
In the month since the war started, I have listened to your plans to crush the resistance. I have no doubt that

we can. We have the technology, the weapons, and for some—

He casts a withering glance at the general who just spoke.

KREED (cont'd)

—the will to bomb these people further back into the Stone Age in which they currently live.

He begins to circle the table.

KREED

But I ask you: should we? We want to bring the benefits of civilization to these people, after all. Should we do so under force of arms? Now, we all know that question has already been answered. We made them kneel, and when they didn't, we shot them in the head for it.

SECRETARY OF WAR

We all understand that mistakes have been made. We thought they wanted civilization. But now—

KREED

Now we are at war, and we must see it through. We must end it with as little bloodshed as possible. On both sides.

Some on the Council shift and mutter.

GENERAL #1

Our covert operatives are already determining the location of Independent General Smith. We will find him, and eliminate him, you can be sure of that, Mister Kreed.

Kreed reaches forward and grabs the basket of apples in the center of the table. He plucks one free and begins to polish it.

KREED

(smiles)

Assassinations. Take out the head, and the body withers. But is this General Smith truly the head?

(he inspects the apple)

These independents are farmers, ranchers. They live on the frontier and, like their namesake, they can and do operate independently. You cut off one head—

Kreed tosses the apple to General #1, and reaches forward to pluck another apple from the basket.

KREED (cont'd)

—And another will take its place. But what of the ground beneath their feet?

SECRETARY OF WAR

What do you suggest?

KREED

Not what, gentlemen. But where.

(raises apple)

Where this very fruit grows, the finest apples in the 'Verse.

He tosses the apple to Admiral Jing-Ying, and passes out the rest to the others.

KREED (cont'd)

A moon that produces surplus food, enough to supply the entire Independent Army.

(presses a button on a remote at his seat)

The outer world called Shadow.

The screens surrounding the room light up with an image of Shadow, half in daylight, green and lush and alive, the other half cast in shadow.

KREED

It orbits the gas giant Surga, and combined with its rotation, one hemisphere never sees the sun, hence the name 'Shadow'. Consequently, the other hemisphere receives ideal amounts of sunlight and eclipsing shadow for agriculture. Both plant and animal life grow in abundance.

Kreed moves toward one of the screens. The twelve men and women follow him with keen eyes.

KREED (cont'd)

From a strategic standpoint of its position in the 'Verse, it is insignificant. Its people are neutral on the issue of independence. But like the buffalo to the Native Americans on Earth-that-Was, it will be the Independents' overlooked weakness in this war.

GENERAL #2

Shadow is not a military target, Mister Kreed. Can you imagine the public outcry if we blockaded this world? Or worse yet, destroyed it? We'd lose support for the war!

KREED

And I agree, General. Please - eat your apple and allow me to continue.

(takes a small bite of his own apple)

What I plan to do, gentlemen, is to end this war for you. Shadow will survive, but not thrive. The Independents will starve, but only their will to fight will die. And the only one they will blame will be God.

CLOSE IN: on the image of Shadow, which becomes—

EXT. SPACE – SHADOW – ESTABLISHING

—the moon of Shadow itself.

TITLE: Four Years Later

BOOK (VO)

It took four seconds to secure Blue Sun Bioengineering as my biological weapons contractor. It took almost four years for them to develop a biological agent that could cripple Shadow's ecosystem.

KREED'S COMMAND SHIP, a large freighter, arrives in orbit. It is flanked by two smaller, equally-innocent-looking ORION RECONNAISSANCE COMMANDO (ORC) SHIPS.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

Grace oversaw its development, and I took my seat on the Security Council. In that time, the Independent forces strengthened, and the body count skyrocketed. The forces under my command, the Orion Reconnaissance Commandos, turned the tide of many battles. But it wasn't enough.

The three ships enter atmo, and we hear the rush of their ENGINES.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

We tried to win the war their way. It didn't work. When I received word from Grace that the weapon was almost ready, we left for the target.

The ships plunge into the shadows of the dark side of the moon.

EXT. SHADOW

Kreed's ship, spotlighting the ground, lands on Shadow, followed by the ORC ships.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The weapon was nothing but a fungus, genetically engineered to spread and infect to the proper specifications under Shadow's environmental conditions. Natural fungi grow best in the darkness. It was perfect. Poetic.

FLASH CUT: A bright white lab, with tinges of blue light. In a Petri dish: a RED FUNGUS grows – very quickly.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – BRIEFING ROOM

Kreed and Grace stand before JACK TUNSTALL (younger than he was in 'Haven' and 'Open Wounds') and his small team of ORC SOLDIERS, who are seated.

KREED

This is not a search and destroy mission, people. If we are successful in our task, you will never even have to switch off your safeties. Rules of engagement do not apply here – you will not engage the enemy, under any and all circumstances. This is a covert operation, and a deniable one. If you break your cover, I will kill you myself.

(he eyes the soldiers)

Questions?

TUNSTALL

Sir, how long before we deploy the weapon?

GRACE

I have assurances from our contractors that the weapon will be ready within the week. Considering mass production and flight time, we expect full deployment operations to take place within the month.

TUNSTALL

The month? What do we do until then?

KREED

Infiltrate Shadow. Weed out Independent threats, if any, then locate and assess the ideal targets for infection.

EXT. SHADOW – MARKETPLACE – DAY – ESTABLISHING

Lively SHOPPERS and MERCHANTS fill the local market, a shabby collection of outbuildings and tents.

The permanent buildings of a SMALL TOWN surround the market, and a LARGE DOCKYARD lies adjacent to the town, filled with FREIGHTERS and SHUTTLES.

KREED (cont'd, VO)

But first and foremost – be seen. Mix with the populace.
Talk to them. Make friends. These people are good
people. Do what you do best, minus the killing. Our
presence must not be viewed with suspicion.

In the background, the towering pyramid of an ATMOSPHERIC PROCESSOR stands against the horizon.

EXT. SHADOW – MARKET – DAY

Kreed and Grace walk through the festive market, eyeing the local goods. Tents overflow with food and drink. Some tents provide entertainment, with games taking place. One stall reads "Reynolds Meats."

Grace takes Kreed's hand. Kreed looks at her; looks at their hands together.

GRACE

We're supposed to be married, remember?

She shows him the RING on her finger.

KREED

(smiles; the first time we've seen it)
Aren't we too old to still be holding hands?

GRACE

That's what makes us sweet... And what do you mean,
"we?"

KREED

I supposed you're right. You may be too old to hold
hands. But I'll tolerate it.

They both smile – sharing this brief moment, as they continue to walk.

Kreed spots an APPLE STAND. He and Grace stop to inspect the apples. The OWNER, a plump man with a beard, steps up to them.

OWNER

Go on and try one. The best tastin' on Shadow, I think.

KREED

The best in the 'Verse, then?

OWNER

If I do say so myself. Bargain prices, compared to what they go for on them central planets.

KREED

That so?

OWNER

Tell you what. You buy one for yourself and one for your lady-friend there—

GRACE

Wife.

OWNER

`Scuse me, sir. Buy one for you and your—

(winks at Grace)

—wife here, and if you taste one that's better down the line, I'll give ya back yer coin.

KREED

Can't argue with that, I suppose. So how's business been? Considering?

OWNER

It's dropped off some. Not nearly as many freighters want to risk coming out here. But the central planets love their apples, so someone with some <balls> makes it happen.

Kreed exchanges coin for a pair of apples, then he and Grace walk further down the market lane. Grace chomps into her apple.

They walk past a WOUNDED INDEPENDENT SOLDIER in a wheelchair, his legs ending in stumps. He holds an Independent flag, and a sign that reads "I fought for you." A bucket rests against the wheels.

Kreed tosses him his apple.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

God bless you, sir.

KREED

No, thank you, son.

Grace and Kreed continue on, when Tunstall appears at their side. They do not look at each other.

TUNSTALL

Just like the last town. Limited Indie presence – mainly casualties of war come back home.

They walk into a crowd of farmers who are bartering their goods.

KREED

And the target?

TUNSTALL

Security's lax at the air processor. Our cover as maintenance will work just fine.

KREED

Good. So now we wait.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – GARDEN – WEEKS LATER

Kreed's garden in his ship is a large, steel room, with LAMPS and SPRINKLERS mounted on the ceiling, beneath which sit ROWS OF PLANTS. DRAINS mark the floor at regular intervals.

Kreed bends amongst the plants, working and gardening. He holds a small bucket. It is filled with TINY WEEDS and DEAD PLANTS.

BOOK (VO)

When not mixing with the people of Shadow, I spent much of my time tending to my garden, on the dark side of the moon. It is amazing that even under the most controlled conditions weeds take root.

Grace enters the garden as Kreed grips a rather LARGE WEED.

GRACE

They're offloading the weapon into the shuttles, sir.

KREED

And its specifications?

GRACE

They estimate the probability of an uncontrolled outbreak at five percent, but only under the most ideal of environmental conditions.

KREED

Five percent.

Kreed stares at the plucked weed in his hand.

GRACE

It is a justifiable risk, sir.

Kreed nods and sets the weed in the bucket.

KREED

Do it.

Kreed yanks another large weed free of the dirt.

CLOSE IN ON: the PLANT growing in the soil – on one of its wide LEAVES – the surface of the leaf fills the screen.

BOOK (VO)

We deployed the fungus at the five air processors on Shadow. The mission was a success – not a bullet fired nor drop of blood spilled. Tunstall and his men were in and out, and the people of Shadow were none the wiser.

FIVE RED SPOTS flare on the surface of the leaf, as if indicating where the five air processors are located on Shadow.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The fungus spread with the prevailing winds.

The red spots SPREAD across the leaf, the disease moving in slightly different directions, appearing as time-lapse photography.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

At first, it worked as expected. The ecosystem suffered, and food production slowed. But we soon learned a terrible truth.

The red splotches widen and merge. The leaf withers.

Kreed plucks the diseased leaf and inspects it. Tunstall enters the garden behind him.

TUNSTALL

Sir, something's wrong.

Act Two

EXT. SHADOW – FARM FIELDS – DAY - ESTABLISHING

FIELDS OF WHEAT from horizon to horizon. In the distance, a pyramid-shaped AIR PROCESSOR chugs out its gases, and dotted throughout the agricultural expanse are tiny PLUMES OF SMOKE.

BOOK (VO)

We inspected the spread of the fungus from above. Better to see it with my own eyes. To smell the smoke of the controlled burns already taking place. The fungus was doing its job, but it was doing it too well.

An ORC SHUTTLE flies into frame. At the open doors are Tunstall, Grace and Kreed, surveying the fields below.

INT. KREED'S SHUTTLE

Tunstall SHOUTS above the wind at the open shuttle doors, pointing.

TUNSTALL

We're upwind from the air processor, sir, but you see there? The fungus has spread against the prevailing winds.

Kreed raises a pair of BINOCULARS and looks down at the field.

THROUGH THE LENSES: the wheat is diseased and red with fungus. The SPARSE TREELINE separating one field from another is likewise diseased.

KREED

How can this be?

Kreed lowers the binoculars and hands them to Grace.

KREED (cont'd)

Wave our contractors at Blue Sun. Now.

The shuttle approaches a plume of smoke.

Below, a FARMER with a TORCH walks along the edge of a DIRT ROAD, igniting an adjacent field not yet diseased. The wind spreads the fire away from him, toward the sea of red.

GRACE

Look. He's burning his field like the others.

Up the road comes an OLD MULE, rusted but still running. Out of the mule springs a SECOND FARMER. The second farmer holds a GUN.

KREED

That's not his field.

The two farmers argue, gesturing wildly. The first farmer points at the field on the other side of the road – obviously his own. More shouts and gestures. The first farmer turns away from the second and continues his task.

The second farmer SHOOTS him in the back.

KREED

That field is his life. He's afraid he's losing it.

(to Tunstall)

Get us out of here. We need to be quick if we're going to contain this.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – BRIEFING ROOM – LATER

A LARGE TOPOGRAPHIC MAP of Shadow's surface fills a viewscreen, SHAPES OF GREEN outlining the continents. SPLOTCHES OF RED interrupt the green, primarily surrounding YELLOW TRIANGLES, but some are separate.

TUNSTALL'S FINGER enters the frame and begins pointing as he explains:

TUNSTALL (VO)

The fungus is spreading in all directions from the air processors, infecting all plant life. It has also infected separate areas here and here, which indicates that it is not only moving with the wind, but via transport ships. Delivery vessels. Passenger vehicles. Wildlife. The bottom of people's boots. Anything, really.

KREED

Anything? How could we have lost control of it like this!?

GRACE

The weapon is doing exactly what it was engineered to do. Spread. What we now face was projected as unlikely, but it was a risk.

KREED

Five-percent.

He leans forward and rubs his face.

KREED (cont'd)

What do our contractors say? What are their revised projections?

GRACE

Blue Sun's new model predicts the fungus will cripple eighty-percent of Shadow's base-line ecosystem within three months.

KREED

(to himself)

I told them it would survive.

GRACE

Due to their low inventories from supporting the Independent war effort, we can expect mass starvation without external aid.

TUNSTALL

That's assuming the terraforming doesn't fail.

FLASHCUT: Kreed in his garden earlier, inspecting the leaf showing signs of the disease.

FLASHCUT: Back to the briefing room as Kreed thinks.

KREED

What is the risk of a massive outbreak... of the fungus spreading to other worlds?

GRACE

(hesitant)

It is a risk.

KREED

(sarcastic)

Five percent?

TUNSTALL

The port authorities have grounded all ships.

KREED

But they don't know what we know.

GRACE

Nor can they ever, sir. We must maintain our cover.

KREED

This crisis needs to be contained. Were this disaster to spread to other worlds...

(terrified beat; deciding)

Quarantine Shadow. Nothing leaves the planet until it goes through decontamination. And the people will need aid.

GRACE

I advise you to wait, sir. Wait until they ask for help. They will. Then we make our requests of the Council.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – BRIEFING ROOM - LATER

Kreed and Grace speak via Wave with MilCom high brass. The wave screen image is warped, showing everyone seated at the round table back on Sihnon – they are obviously angry.

BOOK (VO)

Grace was right. It didn't take long for Shadow to send out a distress Wave. The Independents received it first, but they were too stretched to spare any forces for a peacekeeping mission. I Waved MilCom immediately.

KREED

Mister Secretary, the time for assigning blame will come later. I am ultimately responsible, but I do not believe it is in your best interests if I step down. I will see this through.

(no response from the Council)

What is important now is to contain the problem, and above all, help the people of Shadow.

ADMIRAL JING-YING (via Wave)

I agree. If the Alliance sends aid and the Independents do not, that strengthens our image.

SECRETARY OF WAR (via Wave)

But the truth of Shadow must never leave this room. Any peacekeeping forces we send must not be made aware.

KREED

Yes, secrecy is paramount. We did not intend for this to happen. But it has. And we are responsible. If that truth were ever made public, the Alliance would not survive.

(his plain words are heard)

I request the 107th Infantry to maintain order,
accompanied by the ARB to enforce the quarantine and
provide much-needed aid.

GENERAL #3 (via Wave)

The 107th is filled with soldiers who call Shadow home.
Their presence will be welcomed. Trusted.

KREED

Precisely. Now, if we can discuss the matter of my
request for supplementary terraforming—

GENERAL # 2 (via Wave)

The Alliance cannot spare those resources.

GENERAL # 3 (via Wave)

It's the only way to help the planet.

SECRETARY OF WAR (via Wave)

(to Kreed)

You will have the 107th division, and the support of the
ARB.

Kreed nods, but holds his tongue.

SECRETARY OF WAR (cont'd, via Wave)

Parliament has dispatched an Operative as well, to
protect its interests in this matter, which are great.

Grace looks uneasily at Kreed. Kreed's face is unreadable.

KREED

If that will alleviate Parliament's concerns.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP

The DOCKING DOORS open, and the MAN we will come to know as 'OPERATIVE
ZERO' stands behind them (the same Mysterious Man who hunted Serenity from
'Lonely Places' through 'Fireworks'—although, of course, younger).

Operative Zero steps forward and shakes Kreed's hand. Grace stands at Kreed's
side.

BOOK (VO)

Parliament's man arrived within days.

INT. KREED'S GARDEN

Kreed stands at the door and looks over his ROWS OF PLANTS.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

I was satisfied he was there to serve and observe.

EXT. ORBIT ABOVE SHADOW

Massive Alliance Reconstruction Brigade (ARB) QUARANTINE SHIPS orbit the moon; smaller FREIGHTERS and TRANSPORTS wait to dock.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The 107th arrived in force within a week, the ARB not long after. No one was allowed to leave while awaiting proper decontamination procedures. Full quarantine.

INT. KREED'S GARDEN

Kreed pulls a diseased, red-splotched PLANT out of one of the rows of his garden and drops it in his weeding bucket.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The fungus was resilient. Imported produce intended to supplement Shadow's dwindling reserves became infected.

EXT. SHADOW – TOWN STREET

ARB WORKERS distribute FOOD from a PANEL TRUCK. The 107th SOLDIERS keep the clamoring CROWD under control.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The people of Shadow responded as can only be expected. There was panic. Unrest. Some violence. But worst of all... gratitude.

A woman with a baby strapped to her front, takes a packet of food from the ARB workers.

WOMAN

Bless you. Bless you all!

INT. KREED'S GARDEN

Kreed moves up the aisle of his plants, beneath the cold artificial light. He pulls diseased plants free again and again. His motions become more violent. Faster.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)
We did this to them...

EXT. HIGH ABOVE SHADOW

A FIELD OF RED. The fungus has taken over completely.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)
I did this to them.

INT. KREED'S GARDEN

Kreed yanks free the diseased plants. He bares his teeth. He grunts. Soil sprays. He slams each plant into his bucket.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)
I lost control of it.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – BRIDGE

Kreed stands at the window, watching the QUARANTINE SHIPS, as the rest of the crew works. Grace operates a communication console nearby. Operative Zero stands off to the side, observing.

GRACE
The ARB ship in sector three reports a breach, sir.

KREED
On speaker.
(into com)
Report.

ARB CAPTAIN (via com)
A freighter has refused to dock and be boarded for decontamination, sir. They've cut off communications. They claimed to be ranchers hauling livestock, and so they do not believe they pose a risk.

Operative Zero steps forward, moving closer.

KREED

Where is it now?

ARB CAPTAIN (via com)

I'm sending you the coordinates now. It's on an exit vector, sir.

KREED

(to Grace)

Scramble the ORC fighters, and put me through to the freighter.

GRACE

You're on, sir.

KREED (into com)

Attention, unidentified freighter. You are in violation of planetary quarantine. Change your course immediately, and dock with the nearest ARB quarantine ship for decontamination. If you continue on your current course, we will shoot you down. Do you copy?

Nothing. Operative Zero continues to observe.

GRACE

ORC fighters are in position, sir. The freighter is maintaining its course and accelerating to exit velocity.

KREED (into com)

Freighter, change your course immediately, dammit, or we will be forced to fire. Comply. This is your last warning.

Only static on the other end of the com. Operative Zero sidles up to Kreed, looking out the window into the space above Shadow.

OPERATIVE ZERO

They hear you, but they won't listen.

GRACE

The fighters are awaiting orders, sir.

OPERATIVE ZERO

If the ship reaches exit velocity, its blast debris will leave orbit. The fungus could—

KREED

Do it.

Grace hesitates. Kreed glances at Operative Zero, then back to Grace.

KREED (cont'd)

Do it!

Grace communicates to the ORC fighters. Kreed looks out the window with Operative Zero. In the distance, a FLASH OF LIGHT ignites in orbit.

GRACE (OS)

Target destroyed, sir.

OPERATIVE ZERO

You've just saved the entire system, Kreed. Parliament will hear of your heroism.

Kreed stares out the window.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – GARDEN – LATER

Kreed and Grace look over the plants – all dead or dying.

GRACE

Things are going to get worse. When word of the downing gets planetside...

KREED

And at MilCom. I need more troops.

GRACE

But then what, sir? More unrest? More ships that refuse to be boarded? The Alliance is at war – they don't have the resources to quarantine an uncooperative populace.

(no response)

Time will come when someone gets through.

(still no response)

Allan...

Kreed turns and looks at her.

GRACE (cont'd)

This is not your fault.

(beat)

But you know what we must do.

Kreed gives her a slow, tired nod.

KREED

Tear the weed out by the roots.

EXT. SHADOW – DAYS LATER

Eight huge ARB EVACUATION ships orbit Shadow. They are a dull green, with the Alliance insignia superimposed on a red cross and the letters ARB emblazoned across the hull.

BOOK (VO)

The Security Council agreed. The Alliance Reconstruction Brigade evacuation ships arrived none too soon...

Five equally large Alliance SHIPS we've never seen before, bristling with GUNS, move into orbit with the others.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The warships arrived soon after.

INT. ALLIANCE WARSHIP – CARGO BAY

LARGE BOMBS are stacked on CARTS in vertical rows.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The fungus was too great a threat to the 'Verse. It had to be destroyed, and Shadow with it.

A CORVUE SCREEN:

News reports. One title of many reads "*Alliance spares troops to aid in Shadow disaster*" along with footage of aid being prepped, and refugee camps under construction.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

The Cortex was flooded with news of the environmental disaster. The efforts of the Alliance and the ARB were universally praised. Charities were founded. Refugee housing on neighboring worlds was constructed. Somehow, after it all, the mission was a success. The secret was still safe.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – BRIDGE – LATER

Kreed and Grace are overseeing the last preparations when Operative Zero enters.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

Almost.

OPERATIVE ZERO

Mister Kreed, a Lieutenant Derrial and some of the men from the 7th platoon, 6th battalion, of the 107th wish to speak with you immediately.

KREED

This is the lost platoon that neglected to report?

GRACE

Yes, sir.

OPERATIVE

They were 'lost' at an air processor, Kreed.
(eye contact)
They know.

Kreed's face first falls, then hardens.

KREED

I'll speak with them in the garden.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – GARDEN - LATER

The garden is now empty. Lifeless. All of Kreed's plants have died and been removed. Kreed and Grace stand in the empty room, with Tunstall and two armed ORC SOLDIERS.

Operative Zero opens the door and brings in LT. DERRIAL, a young, clean cut soldier, as well as four other SOLDIERS (one of them is EDWARD JUNG from 'Letters to Home').

They stand at attention while Operative Zero retreats into the shadows in a corner of the room.

KREED

I haven't much time to spare, Lieutenant, so whatever you want to say to me, out with it.

DERRIAL

Yes, sir. Thank you for your time.
(clears his throat)
You must halt the cleansing operation, sir.

KREED

Bold request.

DERRIAL

We found evidence of tampering with the air processors, sir. Unscheduled maintenance checks. The outbreak began there, and it did not occur naturally.

(swallows)

We suspect sabotage, sir. Shadow is not a disaster area. It is a crime scene.

Kreed shares a look with Operative Zero.

KREED

You do understand, Lieutenant, that Shadow is in fact a disaster area? That this plague poses a threat to the very survival of the entire system, and it must be contained?

DERRIAL

Yes, sir. I do not disagree. But with all due respect, we are talking about the willful destruction of an entire planet. This incident must be investigated.

KREED

And I've made sure that it has, Lieutenant. The fungus did multiply exponentially within the moist, dark environments of the air processors. Due to the speed of its spread, we have not been able to determine the source of the outbreak.

(motions to the room)

Look at this room! This was once my garden. It's now dead and gone. It bled red, and died. This outbreak must be stopped, and the only way to ensure the destruction of this threat—

DERRIAL

Is to destroy Shadow itself. I understand, but doing that also destroys all evidence of the perpetrator!

KREED

I understand your feelings, son. Shadow is your home.

DERRIAL

That has nothing to do with it! This is about the truth.

KREED

Son, you forget yourself.

DERRIAL

(not listening)

I don't know who tampered with the air processors – Alliance or Independents – but we must find out!

KREED

Are you accusing—?

DERRIAL

I make no accusations, sir. We need more information. Collection of evidence, interrogation of potential witnesses, further chemical and biological tests.

KREED

Lieutenant Derrial, you're not accusing the Alliance of perpetrating this "crime?"

DERRIAL

It is possible that factions within the Alliance sought to destroy Shadow to starve out the Independents.

KREED

We are at war, Lieutenant!

DERRIAL

Which is why we must find out what really happened here! We are fighting for law and order!

Kreed looks again to Operative Zero.

KREED

I have listened to enough of this insanity. There are still people down there in harm's way.

(stares Derrial in the eyes)

You and your men are to continue with the evacuation operations as ordered. Immediately! Now get out of my sight.

DERRIAL

No, sir.

KREED

Excuse me!?

DERRIAL

No, sir! Shadow cannot be destroyed. If it takes a couple hundred citizens to stay planet-side to make sure of that, then that's what it takes. We refuse to follow your orders.

Kreed eyes him and the others long and hard.

KREED

Are you all as insubordinate as your Lieutenant, here?

DERRIAL (cont'd)

You can lock us up, but the truth of what happened here will get out. Dishonorable discharge or not, I'm sure we can find someone at the News Wave Free Press that will listen. Stick us in the brig if you have to...

(stares down Kreed)

Sir.

Kreed's eyes are on fire. He looks to Operative Zero. Operative Zero nods.

KREED

Disarm Lieutenant Derrial.

The two ORC soldiers disarm Derrial of his sidearm.

KREED (cont'd)

Lieutenant Derrial, your feelings for your homeland have clouded your judgment. Infected your motivations. You sow the seeds of mutiny within your unit. You accuse the Alliance itself of conspiracy. All in a time of war!

Derrial kneels on his own, placing his hands behind his back, ready to be arrested.

DERRIAL

You won't get away with this, sir. People will know the truth.

Kreed pulls free his SIDEARM. In that instant, the ORC soldiers raise their weapons on the remaining soldiers, who have no time to react. Derrial's eyes widen.

KREED

The charge is treason, Lieutenant Derrial, in a time of war. And according to Section 25(b) of the Wartime Code of Conduct, the penalty is death.

Kreed points the weapon at Derrial's head.

DERRIAL

But... But I'm innocent, sir!

KREED

(visibly angry)

I don't give half a hump if you're innocent or not! So where does that put you?

CLOSE ON - The gun as it FIRES.

INT. HAVEN – BOOK’S CHURCH – NIGHT

Book tries to continue the story from the lectern, tears running down his face.

BOOK
I shot him.

INT. KREED’S COMMAND SHIP - GARDEN

Viewed from a different ANGLE, we see Creed shoot Derrial in the head again.

Blood splatters on Edward Jung’s face. He and the others watch in horror as Derrial’s corpse arches back and slumps to the floor.

Derrial’s blood runs to the drain.

INT. HAVEN – BOOK’S CHURCH – NIGHT

BOOK (cont’d)
I shot the boy right there. Killed the others, too, just as surely.
(sobs)
Please forgive me.

Book looks up into the rows of pews. They are EMPTY. Book stands in the church alone. He has been confessing only to God.

BOOK (cont’d)
Please forgive me, Father.

Book breaks down, crying, holding onto the lectern to remain standing. FOOTSTEPS resound from the back of the church, in the shadows.

MAN’S VOICE (OS)
You ask for forgiveness, but I wonder if you know... Do you truly know...

Book looks up. He stops crying.

The OPERATIVE (Jude, not the Mysterious Man) steps out of the shadows, hands folded behind his back.

OPERATIVE (cont’d)
...what your sin is, Mister Creed?

Book’s eyes widen with recognition as the man approaches him.

Act Three

INT. HAVEN – BOOK'S CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The Operative walks up the center aisle toward Book at the front of the sanctuary.

BOOK

Can I help you, son?

The Operative sits down in the front pew. He leans forward, elbows on his knees and hands clasped together in front of him.

OPERATIVE

Yes, you can. Whether you will is uncertain.

BOOK

Are you seeking prayer, or guidance?

OPERATIVE

Oh, my search is a bit more... tangible. I seek someone you know.

Neither man moves, but there's very much a sense that they're circling one another.

BOOK

Who are you?

OPERATIVE

You, of all people, should place no faith in names, Mister Kreed. But if I must have one, it is Jude.

BOOK

Welcome, Jude.

(laughs)

'Jude'. The patron saint of lost causes.

OPERATIVE

Lost causes.

(smiles politely)

His letter is also the second to last book in the Bible, followed only by Revelations. One could say the message he brings immediately precedes the coming Apocalypse.

BOOK

One could.

OPERATIVE

Let us cease this banter. You may not know who I am, but surely you know what I am.

BOOK

What do you want?

OPERATIVE

River Tam.

The name hangs in the air. Book does not answer.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)

You met this girl during your time on the Firefly-class freighter, *Serenity*. You befriended her, just as you befriended *Serenity's* crew, particularly their captain, Malcolm Reynolds. He hailed from Shadow, did he not?

No answer. If Book is surprised or terrified, he doesn't show it.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)

From time to time, he comes to you for sanctuary and counsel. And you let him in, out of guilt I expect.

BOOK

Not guilt. Love.

OPERATIVE

Malcolm Reynolds, and thus River Tam, have escaped me yet again. But I believe he may come here, seeking sanctuary – if he hasn't already.

BOOK

Why don't you cut the *gos se* <crap>, son, and tell me the truth of why you're here?

OPERATIVE

I come to you, to appeal to your reason. You were once a man who understood what it meant to do what must be done. That certain sacrifices are necessary for the greater good. For a better world.

BOOK

And I learned that is vanity. Only God can make a better world.

OPERATIVE

Perhaps. But God no longer leads his people from a cloud, nor defeats his enemies with pillars of flame. He leaves that to people like you and me.

BOOK

I left that world long ago.

OPERATIVE

Not so long. I listened to your testimony. You stopped the spread of something that would destroy all that we have created. River Tam carries within her a similar disease – one that I cannot let spread.

BOOK

You believe she knows something.

OPERATIVE

What I believe does not enter into this. My task is to see to it that her secrets remain as such.

BOOK

She's just a girl.

OPERATIVE

(smiles)

Now, you lie. You know what she can do.

BOOK

Her mind is broken. It will destroy her. She is no threat. Let her be, and your secrets will be safe.

OPERATIVE

The threat must be neutralized. You of all people know that.

Book's expression does not change.

INT. KREED'S COMMAND SHIP – BRIDGE

Kreed and Operative Zero look out the BRIDGE WINDOW, inspecting the ARB EVACUATION SHIPS and ORC FIGHTERS orbiting Shadow with Kreed's ship.

Grace sits at a nearby console, with Tunstall standing behind her and looking over her shoulder.

Despite the busy crew, the atmosphere on the bridge is subdued, almost melancholy.

TUNSTALL
(turns to Kreed)
The bombardment is ready to begin, sir.

KREED
What is the status of the evacuation?

TUNSTALL
Ninety-five percent of Shadow's population is off-world.
The remaining five percent are staying put. Refusing to
leave. The 107th report that they have been fired upon,
in some instances, by those that remain on the planet.

Kreed continues to look out the window, his face grim.

OPERATIVE ZERO
Stubborn folk.

KREED
Not stubbornness. Love. Shadow is their home. We kill it,
we might as well be killing them.

Silence on the bridge.

GRACE
The initial targets have been cleared, sir. Perhaps the
approaching flames will help encourage the remaining five
percent to comply?

KREED
(softly to himself)
Five percent...

He ponders for a moment as he stares out the forward window at the reddened
planet.

TUNSTALL
Your orders, sir?

Silence. Uncomfortably long.

GRACE
Allan...

Kreed nods slowly.

KREED
Begin the cleansing.

Tunstall turns to Grace and the two of them communicate via the console.

Within seconds, EXPLOSIONS OF FIRE bloom on the moon's reddish-brown surface.

KREED (cont'd)
(to Operative Zero)
And you, see to the interests of Parliament.

Operative Zero leaves the bridge.

Grace rises from the console, and walks over to stand by his side.

GRACE
Allan, you had no choice. You did what was necessary.

FLASHCUT: Kreed shoots Derrial.

FLASHCUT: Back to the bridge.

KREED
(quietly)
Always what's necessary, Grace. When do we have time
for what's right? Like those men back there, Shadow was
innocent.

ZOOM: Through the bridge window to Shadow below – EXPLOSIONS OF FIRE
spread across the moon's surface like drops of water in a pond.

*FLASHCUT: Kreed stands at the entrance of the bare metal room that was once his
garden. A POOL OF BLOOD marks the floor.*

KREED (VO, cont'd)
Innocent blood on our hands.

*Kreed flips a SWITCH near the door and the SPRINKLERS above rain water down
upon the floor.*

Kreed watches the water wash the blood down the drain.

FLASHCUT: Back to the bridge.

KREED (cont'd)
We're just trying to make them clean. 'Fore anyone sees
the hands helping them are dirty.

GRACE
It must be done, Allan.

CLOSE IN ON: Grace's hand as she reaches for Creed's. He takes hers, squeezing it, backlit by the explosions of fire on the surface of Shadow.

GRACE (cont'd)

It must be done.

INT. HAVEN – BOOK'S CHURCH – NIGHT

Book looks up from the lectern. The Operative still sits in the front pew.

OPERATIVE

Will you help me do what must be done, Mister Creed?

BOOK

No.

The Operative looks disappointed.

OPERATIVE

I understand why you seek to protect her. You still see the flames, don't you? They haunt you. They made the man who stands before me. A man who seeks to atone for his sins. Who wants only forgiveness.

BOOK

I have been forgiven.

OPERATIVE

By the Father, and through His Son, yes. You are a man of faith. But you still seek forgiveness. From Malcolm Reynolds.

(off Book's surprised expression)

Yes. You do.

BOOK

I love Mal. Like a son.

OPERATIVE

A prodigal son at best.

The Operative leans back in the pew.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)

I know everything about you, Mister Creed, just as I know everything about Malcolm Reynolds.

(beat)

He was a believer. A man of faith. Until Serenity Valley. You and I know that you were responsible for the loss of Shadow, a 'natural disaster' which history tells us inevitably led to the loss of his cause, the war. When he lost his cause, he lost his faith. He lost his belief. He lost everything. And he blames God for it.

(no response)

That is what keeps you up at night, and spurs you confess your sins to an empty church.

BOOK

I won't help you.

OPERATIVE

Do you believe, that even on your deathbed, if you told Malcolm the truth of things, he would forgive you?

BOOK

Get out.

The Operative nods and stands, walking slowly back down the center aisle to the church doors.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)

There will be no forgiveness, Shepherd. Remember what the good farmer said? "Leave the weeds alone until harvest time. Then I'll tell my workers to gather the weeds and tie them up and burn them."

BOOK

Exactly, son. Leave it alone.

The Operative opens the church doors and pauses.

OPERATIVE

Mister Kreed, out of respect for you and what you have done to make better worlds, please stay inside this good seed you have planted. For it is, indeed, harvest time.

The Operative exits the doors. They close behind him.

Book stands silent behind the lectern. A faint BOOM is heard from outside. Book leaves the lectern and walks down the aisle.

A louder BOOM. Book rushes to the church doors and pushes them OPEN.

EXT. SHADOW – ORCHARD – DAY

Kreed and Grace stand at the edge of an apple orchard, a SHUTTLE parked nearby. They watch the WALL OF SMOKE on the horizon. The smoke is so thick, the normally bright sky has darkened to shades of orange and red.

KREED

What about Derrial's men?

GRACE

In position, sir. In the line of fire.

KREED

Friendly fire, if there is such a thing. Casualties of war. A heroic sacrifice, placing themselves in harm's way to save people who didn't want saving.

He watches the smoke approach.

KREED (cont'd)

How could it have gone so wrong?

GRACE

You didn't plan for this to happen, sir.

Kreed turns and looks at Grace, whose eyes remain on the horizon.

KREED

The weapon never was safe, was it?

Grace doesn't answer.

KREED (cont'd)

It never did work the way we wanted.

GRACE

No. It never worked the way you wanted.

Grace turns to Kreed. She appears different. Cold.

Kreed turns away, eyes on the flames again.

KREED

How long have you worked for them?

GRACE

Parliament approached me after you left the military to found KISS. They wanted to keep an eye on you from the beginning.

KREED
(grim smile)
And here I thought that this was a recent development.
That during all of this you made a new friend.

GRACE
He was a distraction, to keep you from looking too closely
at me.

They both watch the destruction, neither looking at the other.

KREED
I trusted you.

GRACE
That's why they chose me.

Grace retreats for a moment to an APPLE TREE, somehow still green and alive. She plucks free a RIPE APPLE and returns to Kreed.

GRACE (cont'd)
The war is over, Allan. Maybe not tomorrow, maybe not
within the next year, but the enemy will be defeated
because of this day. The worlds will change, and change
for the better.

Grace offers Kreed the apple.

GRACE (cont'd)
You can be a central part of that change. As an Operative.
People like us are necessary to win this war. And after, to
keep the peace. Parliament wants you, Allan.

Kreed looks at the apple. At Grace.

GRACE (cont'd)
I want you. Come with me. Please.

CLOSE ON: Kreed as he faces the decision. In the background, the sound of the
BOMBARDMENT on the horizon builds.



EXT. HAVEN – BOOK’S CHURCH – NIGHT

Book stands at the church doors, propping them open on either side with both arms.

Beyond we see EXPLOSIONS OF FIRE ripping through Haven.

Act Four

EXT. HAVEN – BOOK’S CHURCH – CONTINUOUS

Book stands at the open church doors. He looks out at the town as it begins to burn.

BOOK
No.

A MISSILE STREAKS down and EXPLODES. PEOPLE run, screaming.

An ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT swoops overhead, coming about for another pass.

BOOK (cont'd)
Please God, not again.

Book steps out of the safety of the church.

The sound of the bombardment carries through into:

EXT. SHADOW – ORCHARD – DAY

Kreed stands before Grace, who still holds the apple outstretched.

GRACE
Please, Allan.

The sounds of the continuing bombardment are faint.

KREED
No.

GRACE
Come back with me.

KREED
With you? Who are you? The woman I trained, the woman I confided in, trusted, would not lie to me. Use me. Conspire against me!

Kreed lashes out and grabs the apple.

KREED (cont'd)
"By the Book" Kreed they call me. A man of integrity. A man of honor. A man who can respond to any situation because he lives by a code. A right way and a wrong way!

Kreed shows Grace the apple and crushes it before her eyes. Its juices spill out over his gripping hand as he throws it into the dirt.

KREED (cont'd)
Who does what must be done! But I didn't do this!
(motions to the smoky horizon)
You did this. All of it.

GRACE
No, Allan. It was you. You conceived it. You planned it. You gave the orders. And the mission was a complete success.

KREED

He was right. The boy was right! People need to know the truth of what happened here.

GRACE

And it will all lead to you. You did this.

(smiles)

A rogue agent, without rank, acting without consent of Parliament. A mercenary. A genocidal maniac, even.

KREED

Someone will...

GRACE

Listen? No one will believe a man who has done what you have done. Summary execution, Allan? To cover up your crimes?

Kreed pulls free his SIDEARM – points it at Grace head. She barely flinches.

GRACE (cont'd)

Is this what must be done? Is this according to your code?

Kreed lowers the gun.

KREED

That code is dead.

Kreed lets the gun drop as he turns away and walks into the orchard.

GRACE

Where are you going?

Kreed doesn't turn around, but continues into the trees. TRACK with him, and soon Grace is gone from sight.

KREED

Where the road paved with good intentions leads.

GRACE (OS)

Allan, please!

Kreed keeps walking.

GRACE (OS, cont'd, distant)

Come back! You'll die out there! Allan!

Grace's calls fade. Kreed's steps go faster. Faster. Soon he is running through the orchard.

He exits the row of trees into a wide lane. He takes off his black beret and tosses it to the ground. He looks one way. The other. Behind him. He turns left, away from the smoke on the horizon. Running.

EXT. SHADOW – WASTELAND – LATER

Kreed slowly walks through the firebombed, smoldering desolation. His black uniform is dirty with soot and ash. His face is cracked and dry.

Kreed hears the distant sound of ENGINES. He stumbles, finds a rocky outcropping to hide behind, and peers back the way he came.

In the distance, a SHUTTLE searches the desolate landscape, SPOTLIGHTS cutting through the smoke.

One spotlight turns toward him.

Kreed ducks behind the cover of the rock. The light passes by.

The sound of the shuttle's ENGINES change, as the shuttle moves on in a different direction.

Kreed watches for a beat, then rises from behind the rock and moves on.

CLOSE ON: Kreed's feet, as they pick up speed, and we MATCH CUT to—

EXT. HAVEN – NIGHT

—Book's footfalls as he runs toward the destruction.

Book looks in the distance to see the PEOPLE OF HAVEN; some run into the street, others stay behind the doors and windows of their HOMES.

Book shouts into the distance, unheard beneath the NOISE:

BOOK
Get to the church! Your homes aren't safe! Get to the church!

A MISSILE flies overhead and slams into a home. It EXPLODES into tiny bits of burning wood. The shockwave sends Book tumbling.

People pour into the street, looking up into the night sky. SISSY TEMPKIN and DOANE are among them. Book picks himself up.

BOOK

Get to the church! Get into the church, damn you!

The Alliance patrol boat streaks overhead, its machine guns peppering the streets of Haven filled with people.

Doane is hit: his ludicrous helmet goes flying, and his blood splashes onto the pregnant Sissy.

She and the other survivors scatter.

Book ducks into and out of cover as he makes his way to the street – his movements confident and quick for an old man. The dust at his feet explodes with bullets.

People fall into the dirt mid-stride, some spinning apart as bullets cut through them.

SMOKE and CRIES OF PAIN fill the air.

Book looks ahead. DEREK mans the BIG STICK, Haven's anti-aircraft cannon, which is surrounded by a wall of sandbags. Derek starts to feed in an AMMUNITION CHAIN, then hesitates, panicked.

BOOK

Come on, son, remember what I taught you.

People run through the streets, in the opposite direction from the church and toward the MINE ENTRANCE. Book sees MILLIE, dragging her SON, and BERNABE, carrying his DAUGHTER.

The Alliance patrol boat swoops in. Derek follows its path with the cannon.

Book rises from his cover.

BOOK

Shoot him, son! Shoot!

Derek fires off a few shots, the TRACER ROUNDS all going wide of the target.

The ship turns and releases a hail of bullets toward the Big Stick, tearing Derek apart and sending him off the cannon, over the sandbags, and into the dirt.

In the same instant, the patrol boat FIRES another missile—

BOOK (cont'd)

No!

—into the center of the group of fleeing people.

The EXPLOSION sends Book flying.

EXT. SHADOW – WASTELAND

Kreed falls into the ash and dust, gasping.

He looks up. His face is blistered, his lips cracked. His breaths are strained. Days have passed since he left the orchard.

He is dying.

His manages to focus through the haze and swirling dust to see the SHAPE of a building.

INT. SHADOW – STONE CHURCH – MOMENTS LATER

Kreed bursts through the doors and stumbles into the building.

He looks around, and notices a basin filled with water. Moaning, he lunges at the basin and begins to drink.

He looks up, finally noticing his surroundings. He sees the WOODEN PEWS, the ALTAR at the front, and a CROSS-SHAPED WINDOW cut into the stone walls high above the altar.

He looks back at the BAPTISMAL FOUNT from which he drank.

He wipes his hands on his black uniform as he walks up the center aisle toward the ALTAR. On the altar sits two candles and a BIBLE – not ornate or fancy in the least – an outer-world church bible.

Searching beneath the altar, he finds a SMALL LOCKER.

He smashes the lock with a candlestick, opens it, and finds COMMUNION BREAD within.

He eats it like an animal.

His chewing slows. He looks up at the cross-shaped window, the light coming through it in dusty beams.

KREED

Oh God.

Kreed falls on his knees, elbows on the altar, holding himself up.

KREED (cont'd)
Why won't you let me die?

He looks at the remaining bread in his hands. He sets it aside on the altar.

He looks to the KISS patch on his shoulder. He grips it and tears it off. Throws it away. He stares up at the cross-shaped window, a TEAR running down his cheek.

KREED (cont'd)
If I am to die, I am ready. If you have other plans for me...

Kreed begins to drop from the altar, his body giving out beneath him.

KREED (cont'd)
...I am yours...

Kreed collapses slowly to the ground, and then slips into unconsciousness.

CLOSE ON: Kreed sleeping as time passes.

From outside: the sound of the RUSH OF ENGINES. The sound cuts out.

The sound of the DOORS OPENING breaks the silence inside the church.
FOOTSTEPS.

A HAND grips Kreed's shoulder and shakes him.

MALE VOICE (OS)
Hey? Hey, you alive there, old timer? Hey—

EXT. HAVEN – NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Book's face as he wakes up.

HIROKU (OS)
Hey, Shepherd. Wake up! Please...

Book looks up and sees Hiroku standing above him. A MISSILE streaks overhead, leaving behind a trail. The BOOM of an explosion follows.

BOOK
Hiroku, we have to...
(struggles up)
You have to get to the church.

The two of them stand amidst the smoking rubble of a destroyed home.

HIROKU
I'm scared, Shepherd.

BOOK (cont'd)
I know you're scared, son, but you have to go. Run! Run
as fast as you can!

Hiroku runs up the street. Book watches him go, satisfied that he will make it. He nods.

Another EXPLOSION shakes the ground – Book stays on his feet. He turns his attention to the patrol boat hovering overhead.

He runs to the Big Stick and jumps onto the cannon's control seat. His movements are confident and strong as he loads the next string of EXPLOSIVE ROUNDS, pulling back of the lever and loading the first round.

Book tracks the path of the patrol boat.

It turns toward the Big Stick, dropping more BOMBS and MISSILES on the colony.

Book FIRES the cannon. The first shot wings the ship.

He fires again and again. His shots find their mark and hit the patrol boat in its center.

EXPLOSIONS rock the ship. It fires its machine gun at the Big Stick as it falls.

The first of the bullets slam into the sandbags, but others HIT Book, his legs and mid-section popping with blood in multiple places. He falls back and tumbles off the seat.

INT. SHADOW – STONE CHURCH

Kreed looks up, shaken awake by a YOUNG SHEPHERD. He wears the WHITE COLLAR, but his uniform is stained and dirty, as if he's been working.

YOUNG SHEPHERD
Praise God, you are alive!

The young shepherd reaches into a PACK and offers a CANTEEN to Kreed. Kreed drinks from it, and coughs.

KREED
A preacher?

YOUNG SHEPHERD

A group of us from the Southdown Abbey have been searching for survivors for a few days. Figured this old stone church was one of the only buildings 'round here that woulda withstood the fire. Glad we checked.

Kreed finishes drinking and hands the canteen back.

KREED

Thank you, son.

YOUNG SHEPHERD

We found others like you, but not many. Some were right in the path of the fire. Miracle they're alive. Can you stand?

KREED

I believe so.

The young shepherd helps Kreed stand, and the two make their way to the door.

KREED (cont'd)

No, wait.

Kreed doubles back and returns to the altar. He takes the Bible (we can perhaps see that it is the same Bible that River will try to fix years from now). The young shepherd sees what he has retrieved.

YOUNG SHEPHERD

You a believer?

KREED

I don't know how I can't be, after something like this.

YOUNG SHEPHERD

What's your name?

Kreed pauses.

KREED

My name is Book... Derrial Book.

The young shepherd and Derrial Book open the church doors and exit. The sound of the SHIP'S ENGINES from outside turns into—

EXT. HAVEN – NIGHT

—the sound of the Alliance patrol boat FALLING out of the night sky.

Book, lying paralyzed on the sandbags, looks up to watch the smoking ship fly overhead, and hears it CRASH and strike the earth.

Everything becomes very STILL and silent.

Book BREATHES shallow and sharp. He dips a hand to his ruined belly and looks at his RED FINGERTIPS. He allows his bloody hand to drop, and looks up into the night sky.

Through the smoke the stars begin to appear.

CLOSE ON: BOOK as he whispers:

BOOK

I believe.

PAN UP through the flames and smoke like the beginning, to a BIRD'S EYE of the scene. Bodies lie everywhere.

BOOK (OS, cont'd)

I believe.

CUT TO: Parents and their children lay dead in the dirt, holding each other.

BOOK (OS, cont'd)

I believe.

CUT TO: Derek lies dead near the Big Stick.

BOOK (OS, cont'd)

I believe.

CUT TO: Book's church is untouched on the edge of the destroyed Haven.

BOOK (OS, cont'd)

I believe.

We hear the RUSH OF ENGINES as the RISING SUN sends streams of light into the sky.

Amidst the LIGHT OF DAWN appears SERENITY, flying overhead. Its SPOTLIGHTS search the ground.

CLOSE ON: BOOK

BOOK (VO)

Look in my eyes, Lord, and my sins will play out on them
as on a screen.

Book sees the ship above, and his eyes brighten a fraction.

BOOK

I believe... I believe... I believe...

PULL BACK and FADE TO WHITE.

BOOK (VO, cont'd)

Read them all.

BLACKOUT